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FURS AND MYSTERY

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PREFATORY

The commerce in furs has taken such rapid strides that the general knowledge of furs has not kept apace; it seems a timely benevolence to interest and instruct people to the end that fur buying may be done with an intelligence which begets confidence.

It is, therefore the purpose of the following pages to tell concisely and comprehensively a few essential facts about fur and fur bearing animals—the durability, appearance, suitability and possibilities of every wearable pelt; hints on the detection of flaws and the discrimination between the real fur and its imitations and substitutions.

It is the desire of the author to enlighten the buyer rather than to expose the unreliable merchant; to stimulate the buying of furs by confidence rather than retard prospective purchasing by instilling the fear of fraud.

That this book prove helpfully instructive is sincerely hoped but if it be found also scientifically interesting it is fulfilling a two fold purpose and its end is truly accomplished.

INTEGRITY + KNOWLEDGE

If every person who contemplates the purchase of furs would choose the store they patronize as carefully as they choose the furs they buy, there would be little question about their getting "value received" for the money they expend.

Far too little attention is ordinarily given to this tremendously important point. Unfortunately, integrity is not to be found on every hand—price bait and style talk often being offered in its stead.

By this it is not meant that style and price are not vital factors in getting value for one's money, but let it be emphatically realized that they are decidedly secondary to quality, which always goes hand in hand with integrity.

The written guarantee of an unreliable store is not worth the paper on which it is penned, but the word of an honest dealer is value-insurance worth while.

Nor does it necessarily follow that the dealer of integrity does not have bargain values. Rather on the contrary, it is in his store that the real bargains will be found; for what he sells will wear, and therein lies the test of whether a garment is good value or bad.

It is also important to remember that, besides integrity, your dealer must have a complete and thorough knowledge of his business if his integrity is to be of any value to you, for he might tell you, with the best of intentions in the world, that the fur he is showing you is this, that or the other thing, when he, himself, has been fooled in purchasing it.

It takes a mighty keen judge of furs to distinguish between the real and some of the clever imitations of today, so make sure before you start out that your chosen dealer, besides being honest, knows his business thoroughly.

WHEN AND WHERE GOOD SKINS ARE PROCURED

It may be interesting to know that the skins of animals caught in densely wooded districts are much darker and of a higher quality than those caught in the more exposed regions, the fur being softer and more silky.

The colder the season or region in which the animals are caught, the better the color and quality of the fur. For that reason the skins of the hamster, marmot, Chinese goat and lamb, Tartar, pony, weasel, various monkeys, antelopes, fox, otter, jackals and other animals captured in the warmer zones were, until a few years ago, quite neglected. However, the demand for furs and the deftness with which these skins are dressed or dyed and many made up to resemble that which they are not, has brought them into greater use.

Thanks to the vagaries of fashion, some furs are occasionally neglected, giving Nature an opportunity to replenish their source. Were it not for this, some fur-bearing animals would soon become extinct.

The sea otter in particular is rapidly becoming extinct through increasing demand and decreasing supply. A mature sea otter often exceeds six feet in length and an exceptionally fine skin will bring in the neighborhood of two thousand dollars. The fur is beautiful beyond description, attractive and luxurious as well as exceptionally durable.

Variations in the color of the fur are many and marked—the rich, lustrous black is interspersed with glistening white hairs or silvery-white hairs sprinkled irregularly over the surface of the dense fur. Some skins are deep brown, shading into black, some bluish-grey, some a beautiful plum color and others slightly yellow.

The fur of the sea otter was long a favorite with royalty in Russia and China, and because of its scarcity and great value few of us can afford to wear it.

The fur of the land otter is coarser and, in many respects, much different from that of the sea otter.

ALASKAN AND HUDSON SEAL

Natural Fur Seal, and there is only one species though found in various places, is a rare animal whose fur is of such quality and beauty that the meager supply cannot begin to fill the demand.

It is not surprising therefore, that a variety of substitutes have been produced to serve in Nature's stead—some good, some bad, many quite indifferent.

Right here is where we do not want to get out of step—good substitutes, when sold honestly as such, are not by any means to be condemned, especially when the genuine article, because of its scarcity, is beyond the financial reach of many who would enjoy it.

"Hudson Seal", "Near Seal", "Electric Seal", "Baltic Seal", "French Seal" and similar "species" are in no sense seal. Each is the skin of some other animal from which, like seal itself, the coarse hairs have been extracted by machinery. Skillful dyeing completes the imitation, which in some instances can scarcely be detected from the genuine.

Of all substitutes, the so-called "Hudson Seal" excels. In reality it is muskrat, which is a very good fur in itself and may creditably be sold as an imitation and NOT as a species of seal, presumably from the vicinity of Hudson Bay.

"French Seal" and "Baltic Seal" are disguising titles for seal-dyed coney, a small animal that is found in France. As a skin, coney does not rank as high as muskrat, but that does not necessarily prevent its being used as an imitation of seal at its proper price level, provided again it IS sold as seal-dyed coney and NOT as a foreign species of genuine seal.



MINK

There are enough grades of genuine mink fur to send one scampering to the reliable fur dealer—not even to mention the clever substitutes which abound in places where dollars rule instead of reputations!

The mink is a larger species of the weasel family, found in all parts of the United States and Canada. In the numerous sections in which the animals are found, the quality of mink skins varies even more widely than the climate, the month in which each animal is caught helping further to govern the worth of its skin.

The beauty of mink skin is in its long, lustrous overhairs, rather than the soft underfur, and skins taken along the North Atlantic coast, northern United States and Canada, in the months of December and January possess greater density and brilliance than those taken in any other place or at any other time.

It is a part of the unreliable fur dealer's business to darken or "blend" inferior Southern or Western skins of yellower cast, by applying a tincture to the fur, and then sell them as natural Eastern skins.

Another so-called "trick of the trade" is to lengthen small skins by piecing-in, or by cutting small slits in the edges and carefully pulling lengthwise until the notches are drawn out and the sides of the skin have again become straight edges.

Now what does all this convey to the prospective purchaser of "the most economical of furs?"

That she must depend upon her dealer's integrity, first—for prime Eastern pelts, not Southern or Western; second—for skins that have been caught at the proper time of the year, even though in the right section; third—for skins that were the right color when caught, not "doctored" afterwards; fourth—for selected skins of the proper size, not lengthened to suit, and fifth—for fair pricing upon the basis of purchase, not upon the basis of what they might be worth next season.

MOLE

This is not the first honest story about the mole. In numerous passages of the Bible this little animal is mentioned in an interesting and impressive manner.

From that good day to this, many things have been perpetrated in the name of the tiny excavator of tunnels and builder of hills, that would not look well in print.

For example a large percentage of the "mole-skin" found in today's market comes from an animal many times the size of the busy little mole—namely the muskrat.

This fur, when sheared, makes an unusually good imitation of the real thing, and is, therefore, a treacherous substitute in the hands of an unscrupulous dealer.

In nine cases out of ten he will get the price of the genuine, which is fairly costly because of the tininess of the skins and the difficulty with which they are caught, while the customer gets the imitation.

Were you to enter his shop with a request for genuine moleskin and have the genuine placed before you, at its fair price, and then the substitute, as a substitute, mind you, at its proper figure—then all would be well, and this article need never have been written. But the time has not yet come when all stores will do this, so one still must be keenly on one's guard.

Genuine moleskins are of a bluish black and are no longer or broader than one's hand. The majority of them come from Scotland, while Holland adds smaller collections to the annual supply.

Muskrat skins range up to 15 inches in length and are extremely plentiful in all parts of this country and Canada. You can readily see, therefore, that the margin of illigitimate profits is no small item.

Besides muskrat, there are poorer substitutes for moleskin, such as rabbit, which in turn can be sold to you as muskrat imitation, if not as the moleskin itself.

FUR DRESSING

The wearer of furs probably little realizes the work and number of processes necessary to render a skin fit for wear.

The dressing of skins is an occupation, or really an art, far more aged than civilization. Just where the Indians or Esquimaux learned the art is not known, but we do know that in the dressing of skins they are not excelled by the expert workmen of today with all their mechanical devices or materials.

Probably the crudest method of skin dressing was practiced by the American Indians, who used to select a smooth, hard piece of ground, fastening the skin to it with wooden pegs. A dressing made from the juices of certain wild berries, mixed with the brains of the animal from which the pelt was taken, was then rubbed over and worked into the leather until it was nearly dry. With a blunt instrument the mixture was then scraped off, leaving the pelt soft and clean.

The Esquimaux method of rendering skins soft was to have the women chew them bit by bit until the whole skin had been softened.

The white man has improved upon the method in which skins are dressed, but he has little improved upon the results obtained by his less civilized brothers.

In the early days of this country's history the red man was the victim of dishonest white men who took advantage of his lack of knowledge of values, taking his valuable pelts in exchange for a few glass beads or other trinkets worth a few cents.

Today the public, because of its lack of knowledge of fur values, is the victim of the dishonest fur dealer.

COYPU (Nutria)

Nutria is a trade name for the fur of the Coypu, one of the few fur-bearing animals of South America. It is a fur which closely resembles beaver. When unhaired and dyed enough of it has been sold

as beaver or seal (which it can be made to imitate) to mean fortunes to the unscrupulous dealers who put over the deception.

Of late, however, nutria has come into its own very largely, and this opens up a new field for the illegitimate profit seekers—that of creating substitutes for it.

You can readily see, therefore, that it is a difficult thing to get, in an unreliable store, good nutria fur under its own name. Many of the good and medium grades are masquerading as beaver and seal while the poor skins and the substitutes take its place.

Unlike all northern skins, nutria is cured by drying in the open air, in the direct rays of the sun, which undoubtedly has much to do with its great durability. For years it has ranked next to beaver in the manufacture of superfine, durable and costly felt hats for men.

All of this shows us that, First—nutria is a good fur. Second—like all other furs, it is of many grades. Third,—it is used largely to imitate more costly furs. Fourth—it is widely imitated. And Fifth—that the dealer of integrity is the man to patronize every time.

SABLE

Sable is a fur which people are usually somewhat cautious about buying, due perhaps to the money involved, and yet that same caution might well be used in buying furs of ANY kind. Were you in the market for a sable piece, the dealer without reputation would no doubt get little consideration, because you would feel that he was well armed with substitutes.

And well you might.

From the lowly rabbit, or coney, upward to the mink, no possible substitute for sable has been overlooked.

Marmot, hare, fitch, weasel and muskrat are all used in attempting to imitate this valuable fur, but the deception is usually poor—due to the fact that genuine sable fur is long, dense and remarkably soft. Besides this, it is so peculiarly rooted in the skin that it may be brushed with the hand

in the natural direction, from head to tail, or the reverse, and it will remain as placed without apparent injury or loss of beauty.

The best grade of sable fur comes from Russia, and here again the dealer who lacks honesty has a chance to deceive, as it is a common practice for such men to offer American sable at a price as high as that usually asked for the genuine Russian sable.

KOLINSKY

Kolinsky is a small and rather handsome fur-bearer resembling the American Mink, or European Marten, and is known abroad as Siberian Sable, Tartar, Sable and Siberian Marten.

The fur, however, is unlike that of either the Sable or Marten, being shorter, harsher and lighter in tint than that of the Sables, the general color being a bright golden, handsome shade of yellow, or brownish yellow, quite uniform in tone on all parts of the body.

Kolinsky is made up natural or dyed Mink color, or much darker shades of brown. The best skins are found in Kola, Russia, while large numbers are obtained in China.

One of the many beautiful features of Kolinsky are the tails, which are used extensively in trimming capes, coats and stoles, either natural or when split and used flat.

Like all other furs of quality, Kolinsky is imitated by cheaper and inferior furs of various kinds, such as rabbit, hare, etc.

It is therefore an important thing that you buy your Kolinsky cape or coat in a store of established reliability if you would get the fur of the little Asiatic animal and not the skins of its lowly imitators.

Another chance one takes in dealing with a furrier without reputation is that one must depend entirely upon the dealer's word, for he has no other way of knowing whether the fur in question is of the finer Russian grade, or of the poorer quality from China—if it should happen to be a genuine Kolinsky at all.

MUSKRAT

Spring caught black muskrat fur is the finest grade procurable. From this class downward, there are so many different qualities that one is bewildered in thinking of them—the principal determining features being, where caught, when caught, what size and what color.

Muskrat is a durable fur—one of the best wearing furs known exceeding in this virtue several of the more costly though less plentiful animals. It is fair then to presume that if muskrats were less plentiful, the fur would sell at a very much higher price.

Besides being so durable, muskrat fur is always in strong demand because it can be used in almost any condition—natural, plucked, blended, dyed or sheared.

In all these conditions, however, it is not sold as muskrat, for the unreliable fur dealer can get a better price for it as mink, brook mink, water mink, Hudson seal, electric seal, Red River and numerous other kinds of seal, none of which exists—and, when sheared, as moleskin.

Regardless of the many lower grades of muskrat fur, which can be doctored to sell at higher prices than they are worth, other skins of still lower value than the poorer muskrat are “treated” and sold by conscienceless dealers as the genuine.

Few people would consider entering the store of a diamond merchant of unknown standing and buying a stone merely on his word that it was “the real thing,” perfectly cut, first water, etc., yet there is more room for deception in selling muskrat fur, and most people know less about it than about gems.

FUR FARMS

The constantly growing scarcity of furs will eventually lead to the establishment of fur farms. In fact, the number of fur farms being established in Alaska and the Yukon territory is increasing each year.

The successful breeding of fur bearing animals in captivity presents many difficulties. Take for example the establishing of a fox farm; a single

pair of silver or black foxes represents an investment of well into five figures. After securing a pair of foxes it is very possible that they may not survive in captivity. This would make necessary the securing of another pair at great expense and with much delay.

Although foxes and some few other animals are now being raised in captivity with fair success, it is not likely that their numbers will be so great as to lower present prices when placed on the market.

It is fortunate that these animal farms can furnish even a limited number of skins, for the newspapers tell us that there is likely to be but little trapping done in the far North for the next ten years, epidemics of influenza having nearly wiped out whole tribes of Eskimo and Indian trappers.

In 1910 to save the rapidly disappearing seals, the United States government took charge of the seal industry on the Pribiloff Islands. Under the watchful eye of the bureau of fisheries, which has charge of the herds of seals on the islands, their numbers have increased steadily and it is probable that the price of seal will be reduced within the next few years.

Until the supply of skins can be increased—either through fur farming or governmental protection—it will be necessary for you to select furs with both eyes open for dishonest fur dealers will continue to gouge the public just as long as they can foster upon it imitations at genuine prices.

OPOSSUM

The opossum continues to flourish in America and Australia despite the fact that he is hunted early and late in every season except summer. Most of the specimens in general use in the making of ladies' coats, neck pieces, muffs, etc., come from Australia and are large and pure grey, sooty or black in color. They are also better furred than the American specimens, having longer fleece and ranking higher in value.

In its arboreal travels the opossum uses its tail as a hand, not in going up, but in coming down; when it wishes to descend it curls the end of its tail around a branch and fearlessly swings down

head first to the limb below, to which it could not otherwise reach and to which it dare not jump.

The young opossums are not much larger than mice at birth. While the young are developing the mother carries them in a pouch, where they are perfectly safe from harm, and to which they instinctively retreat when alarmed. Carrying a litter of young seems to be no handicap to Mrs. Opossum as she swings from branch to branch in the trees.

Australia also furnishes millions of rabbit skins annually in black, blue and silvery color. These are a part of the skins used by deceiving furriers in imitating the more costly furs of sable or seal, and for which you are asked to pay a handsome price.

FISHER

The demand for anything and everything furry prior to the start of the war in 1914 had carried the prices of all skins to top notch and would, without doubt have exterminated most fur bearers, including the fisher, had not millions of men been occupied with the killing of each other.

The fisher is the largest member of the marten or sable family and is found in Canada, the Lake Superior region, northern New York and occasionally in Pennsylvania. This animal is slender of body, has a long pointed head, short limbs and a long and very furry tail; its fur is dense and of good color, but shorter than the fur of the marten.

Many variations are noticeable in its fur, which is generally of a blackish hue with a greyish tinge on the head and shoulders; some specimens are brown on the back and grey on the sides; others are a paler shade of brown, and a few have a white spot at the throat.

The fur of the fisher, aside from being in fashion in America and Paris, found a ready market in Russia, where it was used for the making of costly robes, ladies' hats, etc. Fisher tail trimming is also very popular at times.

Fashion quite naturally determines the price of these skins and in 1906, when fisher was only moderately fashionable, dark raw skins brought six to

ten dollars; since that time they have steadily risen in price, until today a first-class skin will bring many times that amount.

However, the fur of the fisher is often imitated with raccoon and is also subject to one of the "tricks of the trade"—that of enlarging the natural skin by cutting small slits in the edges and carefully pulling lengthwise till the notches are drawn out and the edges of the skin are again straight.

BROADTAIL AND CARACUL

Enormous quantities of lamb skins of various kinds are regularly used in the manufacture of wearing apparel in this and other countries. While most of the skins are white, many are light or mixed grey, and a few are black.

Persian lamb finds large use in the manufacture of ladies' and children's apparel and in addition to being an excellent mourning fur, it is considered by some as being superior in beauty to any fur with the possible exception of sable.

Broadtail lamb skins have been taken from unborn lambs, but are usually taken from lambs a few days old. The tight curl and the wave of the fleece show a handsome weave effect similar to that in moire silk. In fact, a garment of broadtail, properly fitted, will show the lines of the figure equally as well as a garment of moire silk.

Caracul is a handsomely figured, beautifully curled skin taken from young lambs before its excellent black color begins to change.

Space does not permit us to describe the various grades of lamb skins, but we have described the three most sought after. The others are lower in quality and should be, and generally are used in the making of cheaper garments than milady's apparel.

While the demand for the various lamb skins is small in comparison to the demand for the skins of many other fur bearing animals, yet it is well to know these things and always select a furrier whose integrity is unquestioned.

THE SKINNERS OF LONDON

Deceiving the public as to furs is a trait by no means peculiar to twentieth century merchants alone, for in olden times there existed in England an association of furriers and skin dressers known as the Skinners Company of London.

This association was established under a royal charter granted by Edward III and evidently the substitution of one fur for that of far greater value and other tricks were practised in those days as much as they are today by some merchants, for history tells us that the chief concern of this association was to prevent buyers from being imposed upon.

That this association was long lived and much needed is evidenced by the fact that a century later the members of the Skinner's Company received another charter giving them the right to inspect not warehouses and open markets alone, but workrooms as well.

From this series of talks upon furs and fur dealers we do not want you to gain the impression that the majority of fur dealers are dishonest, unscrupulous or devoid of a thorough knowledge of the fur business. That is far from being the case—our purpose in publishing these talks is to tell the prospective purchaser of furs what he or she should know, the better to distinguish between the reliable and the unreliable furrier.

Nearly every concern dealing in furs occasionally advertises its stock or parts of it at reduced prices. But some concerns are dishonest enough to mark up the prices on a garment from twenty-five to one hundred per cent, then cut the marked price to the original selling price and advertise "Great Price Reduction."

There are conditions which make price reductions perfectly legitimate—one, for instance, is the weather. In order to show a steady volume of business month by month and in order to keep its workers busy the year around, the inducement of reduced prices is afforded during the warmer weather.

CIVET AND RINGTAIL CATS

The ringtail and civet cats each have excuses for occupying a niche in the world's fur market.

The former, after being dyed, very closely resembles sable and is used to imitate that fur.

Frequenting the western slopes and Pacific Coast, from Canada to Mexico, the ringtail, rightly named, for it has eight black and seven white rings of fur on its tail, is of light grayish brown color and not at all handsome in its natural state.

The civet is not often used as a substitute, but is very popular with people of pronounced bizarre taste, for it is so strikingly marked, with its large number of broad and narrow lines of white running irregularly through the otherwise black fur that the wearer is destined to be the cynosure for many eyes.

Reiterating how necessary it is to protect one's interests by dealing with people of experience, the following incident occurred some time ago.

A customer entered a store and asked to be shown a Kolinsky coatee, and the clerk immediately laid before her a garment of stone marten, which was recognized at once by the customer. Upon inquiring of the clerk as to the length of time she had been employed selling furs, the clerk replied, "Four weeks, but you can learn all about fur in that time."

CHINCHILLA

Far up in the Andes Mountains in Chili and Bolivia are the native haunts of the chinchilla. This little animal furnishes the most beautiful fur found in South America, or, according to many, in the whole world.

The genuine chinchilla fur (we say genuine chinchilla fur because there are several cross breeds of the chinchilla whose fur does not compare with the genuine in density or softness) is as soft and delicate as purified down and its exquisite coloring embraces every shade of grey from the lightest to the darkest.

The chinchilla is a very small animal, being from ten to fourteen inches in length, including

the tail, and until some twenty-five years ago the annual collection of skins amounted to more than four hundred thousand. A few years ago, however, the Chilian government enacted a law prohibiting the catching, selling and exporting of these skins. After March 1922, they may be caught in limited numbers during but four months of the year.

Because the majority of chinchilla skins came from Chili, the price of this fur has risen steadily since the enactment of this drastic protective measure till today only those of us possessing ample means can afford to adorn ourselves with this beautiful fur.

In addition to the chinchilla, South America annually furnishes us with skins of the otter, wolf, skunk, weasel, puma, coypu, fox, wild cat, jaguar, paco and rabbit, as well as deer, elk, goat and sheep skins.

Your preference in furs may or may not be chinchilla, but whatever it may be, select it much as you would a diamond—from a dealer whose reliability is assured and whose guarantee is dependable.

AS A FURRIER BUYS—

Fur buying is a side to the fur business equally as important to the prospective purchaser as the selling of furs, whether they be sold honestly or dishonestly.

To deal honestly with the customers of his concern, the fur buyer must know furs from A to Z—he must know exactly what he is buying and must sell them for exactly what they are. Then, too, he must know just what constitutes a reasonable buying price and a legitimate selling price. Unless he knows these things and unless he deals honestly with the public, most of whom know really little regarding furs, it will not take long for his concern to establish a reputation not at all envied by its more honest competitors.

A dealer who wishes to deliberately deceive his patrons may, easily enough, offer imitations upon which the workmanship is so skillful that it is hard to distinguish between them and the genuine. Of course it is easy to detect badly or heavily dyed imitations for the under fur is darkened be-

yond its natural state and the skin itself is stained, but a cleverly dyed skin will deceive all but an expert.

In imitation of the more or less expensive furs the domestic cat provides a wide variety of furs. White rabbit is sometimes sold as ermine, chin-chilla or even fox; the fur of the muskrat readily lends itself to imitations of seal, mink, sable and otter; hare skins dyed have been sold as sable, fox or lynx, and common red fox skins are dyed in imitation of black fox and with white hairs added are sold as silver fox, one of the most expensive furs on the market.

The price of furs varies perhaps more than that of any other commodity of changeable value, and, as shown, substitution of one fur for another is comparatively easy.

WOLVERINE

It may seem like a small thing to the purchaser of furs, but nevertheless a few weeks' difference in the time a pelt is taken makes a tremendous difference in the finished fur piece.

If you were selecting a fur could you tell whether the animal from which the pelt was taken was captured at the right time of the year or whether it was caught too early or too late? Probably not.

A pelt captured early in the fall, before the temperature settles down below the freezing point, is unprime and is known as a "blue pelt." The fur of a blue pelt is invariably immature and the leather is weak. Had the animal been taken but a few weeks later the fur would have been far more valuable and would give immeasurably more wear.

Pelts taken a few weeks late, that is, after the temperature has risen to above freezing, are known as "shedders." This is because the animal when taken was about to shed its heavy winter coat. Even after the skin has been taken from the animal, dressed, dyed and made up into the finished fur it will continue to shed. This makes it poor in wearing qualities.

Any furrier who knows his business knows that shedders and blue pelts are almost worthless and

if he is at all honest with his patrons he will not buy them at any price. Until laws are enacted prohibiting the capture of animals before their skins are prime, some furriers will continue to buy these furs because of their cheapness, selling them at prices asked for prime skins at more reliable fur stores.

AN EXPLANATION

There may be those who have gained the impression that we believe this store is the only store dealing honestly with the public in the matter of furs.

We are glad to say that this is not the case—there are concerns who feel about the fur business just as we do—that the public should be told just what each particular fur is even though it be an imitation. These firms are glad to see an expose made of the tricks of the unscrupulous fur dealer, and never willingly mislead the public regarding furs either in their advertisements or in the selling of the garments. Occasionally, however, the honest fur dealer is compromised through the ignorance of some of his salespeople.

Aside from the determination to be strictly honest, these fur dealers know that to remain in business for long it is absolutely necessary that the public get exactly what it pays for and that while for the time being sales and profits might be larger if they resorted to deception—in the end they will profit far more if they treat the public honestly.

If you are buying a substitute, or imitation fur, what interests you most is what you pay for it. In good fur shops you pay its real worth. It is of real value for its own sake. But if the dealer begins to refer to it as some especial kind of seal, or other costly skin, put it down in your little book that there are furs in the same collection being offered for what they are not. It's like "Japanese crab meat," which is a good quality of cod-fish.

Of course there are many concerns, both large and small, which will never be entirely honest till compelled to be by law. These same firms prefer to sell their garments by deception whenever

necessary to make the sale, either making an adjustment or taking back the garments should the purchaser ever learn of the deception.

We can suggest but one way to avoid this latter class of fur dealers—when you start out to shop for furs, choose your fur dealer much as you would a security for the safe investment of your money.

PLUCKING AND UNHAIRING

Most every one knows that raw furs must be dressed and dyed before they can be rendered fit to wear. There is another process about which most people know nothing—that of plucking and unhairing.

Nearly all fur-bearers have a coat of long, coarse hairs scattered over their coat of more abundant soft hairs. This under coat is what is known as fur. While in most animals the under coat is by far the more beautiful, there are a few animals whose skins are equally beautiful when made up natural. To the latter class belong the muskrat, otter and beaver.

Skins which are to be plucked are soaked in water till the leather is softened and the pores opened the skins are then warmed and the leather side of the pelt is shaved to cut off the roots of the long hairs. Plucking is then comparatively easy.

Some other skins, principally seal, are plucked by a different process. For this purpose a machine was perfected late in the nineteenth century which makes possible the plucking of a pelt more rapidly and with better results.

It is in this process of plucking or unhairing that certain skins take their first step toward imitating more valuable furs. For instance: muskrat and coney skins are sheared till the surface is of uniform depth. After this they are either made up natural or dyed to resemble some costlier fur.

Whether sold under its own name or some other name, there is a great deal of work to the preparing of furs for the adornment or comfort of their future wearers. The practical and reliable fur dealer knows and understands each operation as well as the “tricks of the trade.”

STONE MARTEN

The Stone Marten substitutes are opossum and raccoon. Unfortunate, indeed, is the purchaser who pays the price of stone marten and is given a substitute, for genuine stone marten is one of the costliest and most durable of furs.

The skins must all be imported, either from Europe, Asia or India. Those coming from Turkey, Bosnia, Hungary and Greece being the most beautiful, while in Russia, Germany, Greece, Turkey and Asia Minor they are caught in greatest numbers.

Though resembling the common weasel in contour and action, they are brown in color and sometimes called the white-throated marten because of the marking on that portion of the animal.

Another species of this little carnivorous animal is the pine marten, a native of that part of North America wherein the pine trees grow over large areas, as it is in those trees that it obtains its chief source of food of birds, birds' eggs and squirrels.

The color of the American Marten is also of a deep brown shade, almost black in some cases, though some specimens are quite light with yellowish, tinted throat and breast.

While ordinarily somewhat higher prices are paid for the darker shades, yet many people prefer the fur of the lighter hue; and it is but a matter of choice.

The handsome color and density of fur of the marten caught in the regions of the Hudson's Bay so closely resembles sable that it is often sold as Hudson Bay Sable, but you will find that the reliable furrier will apprise you of this fact when you are shopping for fur apparel.

SQUIRRELS

There are so many species of squirrels and "near-squirrels" climbing trees, cracking nuts and "meowing" in all parts of the world, that Milady's squirrel coat, when bought in an unreliable store is indeed a mystery.

The fur of the American squirrel is of no greater value than that of the common house cat, and yet even the latter is used to imitate the genuine.

The species that are valuable come from Russia and Siberia, those from the Amoor district in Eastern Siberia being the finest. These are known as *Saccamania* squirrels.

The second class is known as Yakutsky squirrels, which are divided into two kinds. Then come the Lensky squirrels in four assortments according to color. Next the Yeniseiky class in three grades. Then Obskoy, Beisky, Kasan and so on down the line to poor old "Tabby" or "Tommy".

The full meaning of this is that you must depend entirely upon the integrity of your dealer for honest value at whatever price you pay.

Suppose, for instance, you pay for *Saccamania* and get Yakutsky, or even Lensky—who knows, but the dealer? Most people do not have sufficient time these busy days to even stop to learn the pronunciation of the various names, much less their relative value.

And what if they DID know the entire list?

The dealer who plans to increase his profits by substitution would just as soon tell you the piece in your hand was first grade Yakutsky, even though it be but fourth grade Lensky, knowing that none but an experienced furrier could catch him in the lie.

It is vitally important, too, to remember that the greatest field for deceit is in the class that is most in demand—the good medium grade.

MARMOT

A fur bearing animal which runs the muskrat a good second for diversity of service and durability is the Marmot, a little burrowing fellow of northern Europe.

When alive its color is grey blended with yellow on the back and sides and greyish-brown on the balance of the body. Along in the latter part of September it seeks its home in the earth and from then on till spring it is "not in" to visitors.

The discovery of the marmot as a fur apparel possibility gave to people of moderate means the opportunity to obtain a handsome, lustrous durable fur. For the fur manufacturer by treatment and dyeing, brought forth the marmot skin so close in

resemblance to the mink, even to the extent of producing the brilliancy of the December and January caught mink, that detection is difficult except by the experienced handler of furs. It is also used as a substitute for Jap mink.

As before stated imitation furs when sold as such are honest business transactions which no one deplores, but it is well to protect yourself against substitution by requesting a written guarantee that the article you purchase is just what the ticket calls for.

At a fur sale in St. Louis some time ago, twenty-six thousand house cat skins were offered. Are you sure that you would know old Tabby's skin if it were dressed in another color and name?

FURS AND WARS

The fur business has always felt the paralyzing effect of war as much as any other business and far more than some other lines of business. This is probably due to the fact that America, almost since its discovery, has been a fur exporting country.

When the war of 1812 broke out, fur conditions in this country were quite different from those of a hundred year later. At that time the annual collection of skins was far in excess of their domestic consumption and most of the furs exported were sold at the fur markets in London. With the war on the market value of skins dropped till trapping was unprofitable.

During our war of 1860-65 thousands of former hunters and trappers joined the colors. As a consequence, prices of skins were high and the collection far below the demand.

The havoc created by the world war resulted in far greater loss to the fur business than did the earlier conflicts. Practically all of the countries at war were heavy consumers of furs from this country. When their ports were closed to American shipping the prices of skins began to tumble. Merchants, in the face of rapidly changing conditions, bought but in small lots, a fact which further depressed the fur market.

Many trappers, too, used to receiving far higher prices for their pelts, refused to accept the low

prices offered and trapping was almost at a standstill until the demand for skins for military use somewhat strengthened the fur market.

With the close of the war the demand for furs for consumption both at home and abroad increased to a point far beyond that of pre-war days, and far beyond the supply. As the demand increased substitution likewise increased. Make sure of the furs you are buying by seeking a reliable furrier, for the immense amount of substitution makes a rich harvest for the unscrupulous dealer.

FOX

Foxes of every imaginable size, color and quality of fur are found in every continent and country on the face of the globe. They range from skins scarcely worthy of removal from the carcass to those which bring higher than three hundred dollars in their raw state.

Such being the case, it is unnecessary to go outside the Fox family itself to find room for enough substitution to make one's head swim.

And unfortunately, it is true that no stone has been left unturned, or, to use a more apt expression—no fox has been left untampered, by unreliable furriers in their efforts to sell clever imitations at the price of the genuine.

It seems well right here to give a general idea of the relative values of the better known classes of fox skins, even though the average buyer has no way of knowing that the skins she purchases are not masquerading in the class in which they have been placed.

First comes the black fox, a native of Siberia, Canada and Alaska. Then, the silver fox, also found in the same places, in Greenland and the northern parts of the United States as well; the blue fox from Alaska, Greenland, Iceland and Canada; the cross fox (bearing a dark stripe across its shoulders and down its back), found in Canada, northern New York, Wisconsin and Michigan.

After these comes the white fox, which, strangely is either in strong demand or almost neglected. In the latter case the skin is skillfully dyed to imitate the black or the blue fox—an imitation that

would seem quite legitimate if ALL furriers would sell the skins as good imitation, and NOT as the genuine.

The red fox is next in value, and following this the gray fox, a skin, with few exceptions, of little merit.

There are other species beyond number, running lower and lower in valuation as the list lengthens, but you have read enough to see that fox skins may easily "jump" from one grade to another and that it is absolutely imperative to deal with a reliable furrier if you would get what you pay for.



BEAVER

Beaver is a fur which has been in great demand ever since the discovery of America; even before the arrival of the white man, the beaver was hunted and trapped by the Indian for its fur and as an article of food.

Owing to the ease with which they could be captured a quarter million pelts was an average year's catch up until late in the nineteenth century, but during the past thirty years the beaver has been growing scarcer until today the annual catch is far under one hundred thousand pelts.

The fur of the beaver is remarkably soft and dense and varies in color from a beautiful golden brown to darker chestnut hues—some are reddish brown and others nearly black. Occasionally a pure white beaver is caught.

The woman who has set her heart upon possessing a beaver coat or fur will do well to investigate carefully the reputation of the furrier from whom

she intends to buy, for the skin of the rabbit is sometimes plucked and dyed as a substitute for beaver, to which it corresponds in appearance, but not in durability.

Nutria is another fur closely resembling beaver and is often sold as such.

While any genuine beaver fur is very beautiful and very desirable, the cheeks of the beaver furnish a superior grade of fur which is largely used for trimmings and in the making of the smaller fur pieces.

It is estimated that the combined salaries of our school teachers, policemen and firemen do not total much more than one half the amount of money spent, and mis-spent, in furs.

How greatly our educational and protection systems could be improved if the money wasted in the unreliable fur store could be directed to that cause.

Then, too, you would get real value for your money and your satisfaction would be two-fold.

Before buying a beaver or any other fur, be sure your furrier is not only honest, but that he knows his business as well.

PRICE VS. QUALITY

A lady recently looked at a fur coat in the store or a certain furrier and considered his price for the garment was too high; a few days later she visited another store, finding a coat of the same fur and looking identically like the coat shown her by the other furrier.

She had almost decided to take the coat at the lower price, but, out of curiosity, she decided to ascertain, if possible, why there was such a vast difference in price on these two coats appearing to her to be identical.

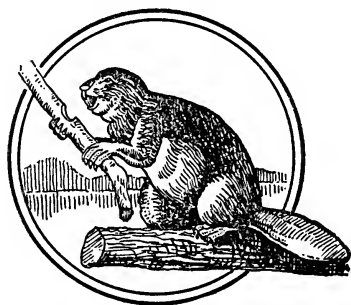
Possibly you have met with the same experience, so we'll tell you what she found: the first coat was made from whole skins, while the second and cheaper coat was but a collection of small pieces or odds and ends of the same kind of fur, pieced together, the density of the fur hiding the cheaper skins used in the piecing.

Needless to say, she bought the higher priced coat, which was far the cheaper in the end.

This is by no means an unusual occurrence, for a clever furrier, willing to deceive his patrons for the sake of long profits, by cutting the skins into strips and piecing them together with sheep skin or some other cheaper hide, can turn out a garment as good looking as the garment made from whole skins.

The lining and padding of such pieces aid the dishonest furrier in his deception, but if you will grasp the garment firmly and rub it slowly between the hands, the many seams can readily be felt.

This only proves that furs, like diamonds, should be bought from a dealer whose reputation for reliability makes trickery impossible.



SKUNK

Skunk is a good fur that has had to live down its own name.

Before the war, while Europe was buying American skunk skins under their rightful title, it was found necessary, to sell it successfully in this country—to “rechristen” the animal as black marten, American Sable or French Sable.

The deception, however, was finally discarded by most of those who had adopted it, and today the purchaser of skunk fur has a strangely different problem on her hands—that of really getting skunk when she asks for it instead of some inferior fur dyed to imitate it.

Poor little animal. First it dare not be known under its own real name, and now after the superiority of its fur has won out over all obstacles, the title previously despised is now falsely used to sell a variety of substitutes.

Among the more prominent masqueraders of skunk fur are raccoon and opossum, both of which have to be dyed to carry out the deception. Many a good reliable furrier carries in stock imitation skunk to serve those who do not care to pay the price of the genuine, but where he differs from his unreliable brother is in the fact that he sells it honestly, properly priced, as imitation skunk, and NOT as genuine skunk improperly priced.

Like all other furs, skunk is naturally of many shades, ranging from skins that are almost unworthy of curing, up to truly beautiful peltries rivaling marten in excellence.

This then, adds another reason to the long list for shunning the dealer who lacks integrity, for after all, it would probably be better to get a good grade of raccoon or opossum imitation of skunk than the bottom grade of the genuine article.

The furrier of established reliability is your one and only protection against fraud.

THE INEXPERIENCED CLERK

The sublime ignorance displayed by inexperienced clerks in some stores in answering customers' questions is pathetic, but would be immoderately ludicrous were it not for the fact that it is so often very costly to the customer.

For instance, a girl was shopping for a beaver collar, and upon being shown one asked if the fur was genuine beaver, and the clerk said, "Yes, that is genuine Nutria Beaver." Upon being pinned down for an explanation of what Nutria is, the clerk said that it is the fur from a beaver's stomach.

Now, is it any seven-day wonder why people become dissatisfied when their fur apparel does not wear, or look, as it should. Nutria, the trade name of the South American Coypu, closely resembles some grades of North American Beaver,

but there is no reason why it should be sold as "Nutria Beaver", or the more ridiculous explanation, "fur from the beaver's stomach".

Personal supervision by one of practical experience should be given all transactions in fur. Clerks should have sufficient knowledge of furs that would enable them to be the buyers' assistant, and not merely a selling automaton.

The shop of reliable furs will not only represent the merchandise in its true form, but when necessary will also open a seam and show what is below the beautiful lining and padding.

Fur of the wolf makes warm, durable muffs and is highly prized by many owners, but, in view of the fact that a majority of people are but children in the hands of the unscrupulous dealer, it is well to beware of the wolf in sheep's clothing.





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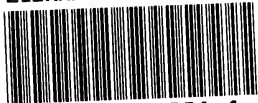


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